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ABSTRACT

Many of the deficiencies of bilingual/bicultural programs at present are due to short-sightedness as to the real scope of bilingual/bicultural education. This article expands the scope of some of the current theory and points out reasons for the inefficacy of some bilingual/bicultural programs and suggests methods whereby programs could be improved. The article is organized into the following sections: (1) the international scope of the problem and some background; (2) statistics of civil service exam failure rates, indicating which ethnic groups are the most culturally disadvantaged; (3) a discussion of Asian-American linguistic and social voicelessness, because of their traditionally quiet character and their lack of knowledge of English and of American social skills; (4) typical bilingual/bicultural programs and their inadequacies; (5) children's textbooks from China as good models to use in the education of Asians; (6) some orientation techniques for sensitizing persons involved in cross-cultural education; and (7) some cross-cultural curricular concepts for Asians in America. The overall suggestion is that bilingual/bicultural programs should be more pluralistic in every way. (TL)

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# PLURALISM AND POTPOURRI: ASIAN AIN'TS*

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Bilingual-bicultural education as an instructional tool holds much potential for learners of any age to cope with the many problems that they encounter in life. Unfortunately, however, much of its present effort is rank amateurism. Happiness, more than intelligence, is sought after. Much of the fault for this situation lies with the operational myopia of what the real scope of bilingual-bicultural education is.

Although this article takes particular aim at Asian programs, an area this writer is familiar with, many other ethnic bilingual-bicultural programs obviously contain the deficiencies mentioned throughout this article.

The following outline, although itself minimal in scope, is larger than some of the theory and thought that go into the planning of many bilingual-bicultural programs:

- The scope of the program
- Some civil service examination and higher education figures concerning Asians
- A theoretical discussion of Asian linguistic and social voicelessness
- Typical American educational programs for Asians and their failure to fulfill real needs
- Sample of China's children's literature as models of fulfilling needs assessment
- Some orientation techniques for sensitizing persons involved in cross-cultural education
- Some curricular concepts for Asians in America

The scope of the problem. Although the term "disadvantaged" is generally in disfavor, it is used deliberately here because all persons are disadvantaged in relationship to something else. Here, disadvantaged is meant those social and cultural factors that cause a child to enter a school system with knowledge, skills, and attitudes which hinder learning and contribute to a cumulative academic deficit. These factors include race, social class, ethnic origin, poverty, sex, and geographic location.

Organized efforts to educate socially and culturally disadvantaged children have a long history, of which, one effect in the Western world has been compulsory free education. Aside from the time aspect, the problems of educating socially and culturally disadvantaged children have a geographical aspect, too. These problems have taken on such worldwide proportions that the International Bureau of Education made them the theme of its International Conference on Education in September 1971. Additionally, the prestigious Organization

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for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has several educational programs studying the education of the culturally and socially disadvantaged. Another organization that comes to mind is the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe. As a result of groups like these, certain structural changes have come about (the increasing of early childhood education programs and the increasing of school counselors in the lower grade levels), as have longer-ranged goals (the emphasizing of career, vocational, and educational guidance; and the widening of sociocultural activities for adults and children).

With this brief background, attention is now turned towards a number of ideas about bicultural education, particularly as it may apply to Asians in America.

Some statistics. The following are the failure rates of those who took written civil service exams in San Francisco in 1971:

| | |
|---|---|
| . Whites | 40% |
| . Blacks | 76% |
| . Filipinos | 83% |
| . Asians | 71% |
| . Spanish | 73% |
| . Other NW | 81% |

At the University of California, Asian students comprised 20% of the subject A classes although they made up only 12% of the Freshman classes. 53% of the Asians failed to demonstrate competence in college level reading and composition compared to 25% for the general campus population (1962).

These figures are only part and parcel of a larger problem that we now turn our attention to.

Linguistic and social voicelessness. A voiceless person is a frustrated person. In many ways, the Asians in America are voiceless. Some Asians are voiceless because they lack, through no fault of their own, English language skills of an amount that would even permit them to survive in their larger communities and societies. Programs that would enable them to pick up needed English language skills are totally inadequate in number, and even these few are seemingly perpetually threatened with unfunding. Despite the recent Supreme Court ruling (Lau vs. Nichols) that San Francisco's Chinese children require extra efforts from the SFUSD with their English language training, the local school system is making no apparent effort to comply short of asking others to help out, all the while asking nothing of itself.

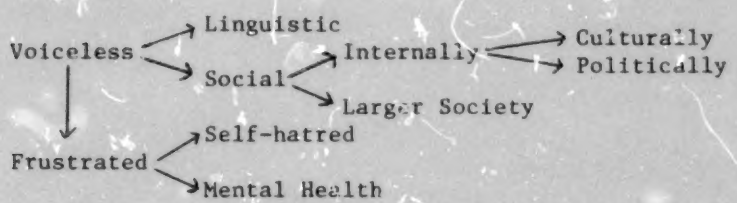
For those who do have sufficient English language skills, they usually find that they are victims of another kind of voicelessness, a kind that is equally, if not more, frustrating than the first kind mentioned. These Asians are the ones who have few social skills. These are the ones who are socialized to be unsocial. Within their own narrow Asian communities, they are allowed little or no opportunities for leadership skills because they do not bow to the

monied interests who economically and politically dominate the Asian ghettos and communities. Outside of the Asian communities, the larger society has forced the Asians into non-threatening fields, fields that call for little in-depth social contacts (pharmacy, engineering, accounting, etc.). For the few Asians who do get into social type activities, they are almost always prevented from assuming decision-making roles.

There is, then, a social/decision making vacuum among a large number of Asians. Make no mistake about it. The vast majority of Asians in America today fall into at least one of the two categories above, if not both of them. The results have been disastrous, albeit predictable. To this day, Asians are in a voiceless vacuum, and in their frustration, often turn upon themselves instead of the systems that cause their frustrations. Their general desire to cause no trouble and noise, a cultural as well as a social defense against the larger society, has made them voiceless and defenseless - both of which are bad for their general mental health. Consequently, they are often overlooked in social programs that can uplift them to full citizenship. They are skimmed over both by the ethnic majority and by the other ethnic minorities alike.

The following model summarizes the major points of this discussion:

Theoretical Model of Asian-American Voicelessness




What educational resources can help alleviate some of the conditions mentioned? What skills can Asians acquire in schooling that would uplift them to adequate citizenship in American society? The discussion that now follows will examine the present educational situation as well as future directions that must be taken.

Typical programs and their inadequacies. Most bilingual programs have never really seriously defined such terms as bicultural, multicultural, cross-cultural, intercultural, and intergroup. Furthermore, on an operational level, these programs have not seriously faced up to the fact that they could lead to separatism as distinguished from pluralism or to the melting pot as distinguished from pluralism. Specifically, these programs have not examined what their curricular processes are and what they can lead to. Is it really cultural pluralism when a school year's lessons cover, say, Chinese culture (the more esoteric parts of it, yet) with little said of comparative and contrastive findings? Where does cultural pluralism end and the melting pot begin (heaven forbid) when special programs claim to give students the best of every culture? In other words, how do we know we have reached one and not the other?

Regardless, time is not to be spent now on definitions that are highly philosophical. What is being pointed out is that what programs say they are and what they really are, have not, to a great extent, been carefully thought out. Without careful examination of curricular processes, one does not know if a program is really heading towards cultural pluralism.

Cultural pluralism aside, there is a pluralism of types of Asians. This brings to mind the terms "Asian," "Asian-American," and "oriental." By Asian, it is generally meant to include peoples and cultures from Far Eastern countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Thailand, Ceylon, and Burma; from other Eastern countries such as India, Pakistan, and Nepal; and from Pacific areas such as Indonesia, the Phillipines, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. Asians, then, is quite a large term. Asian-Americans, obviously, are those Asians whose experiences have included some time spent in America. Oriental is a narrower term that Asian. It generally applies to Asians just from the Far East, such as China and Japan. Some Asians are sensitive to this word because to them it has overtones of Western colonialism and imperialism.

Given these broad definitions, one would be hard put to see any Asian bilingual program in the United States studying more than one Asian country. Furthermore, even in studying one specific Asian group, the Chinese, for instance, bilingual programs have failed to meet the needs of American born Chinese as distinguished from the overseas born. These programs have also failed to distinguish the differences of the suburban Chinese from the urban and of the urbane from the non-urbane. None of these categories necessarily overlap. Yet, how often are Chinese bilingual programs set up as if every Chinese child were from China and also still in China? Where is the pluralism?

A third way in which many Asian programs, bilingual and otherwise, are not pluralistic is their not addressing themselves to needs common to all cultures - health, safety, and welfare; career education; consumer education; environmental education; issues of war and peace; futurism. And running across all these are the skills of values inquiry and clarification; decision-making; bureaucratic and organizational skills as an employee, customer, client, manager, and entrepreneur; mathematical skills; and argumentation skills. Do not our non-English-speaking and limited English-speaking children need these studies as much, if not more, than their more advantaged English speaking peers? Do not bilingual-bicultural programs provide a good opportunity for learning commonalities and differences that can lead to real crosscultural understanding? Would safe studies on holidays, folk customs, and foods <u>alone</u> help the non-English-speaking and limited English-speaking child to cope with the harsh realities of life in America?

Just a short while ago, mention was made of futuristic studies. This may seem far-fetched, but think of these facts. Divide the last 50,000 years of man's existence into lifetimes of 62 years each. There have been 800 such lifetimes. 650 of these were spent in caves. Only in the last 70 lifetimes has it been possible for us to communicate effectively from one lifetime to the next. Only during the last 6 lifetimes have masses of people seen printed words.

Only during the last 4 has it been possible to measure time with precision. Only in the last 2 has anyone used an electric motor. Most of the material goods we use in our daily life have been developed in this, the 800th lifetime. Our environment is always new (if not depleting), increasingly unfamiliar, and alien. Alvin Toffler says that these unfamiliarities produce future shock. So, our educational programs have to help our children overcome not only cultural shock but also future shock. Since Asians generally have a great respect of things in the past, do not our Asian bilingual programs have a greater mission than to just study lesser concerns? Is there the realization that Asian children face greater prospects of disorientations than many other children? It is no accident that an organization known as the Asian-American Mental Health Federation has recently been formed to begin coping with some of the problems mentioned.

Much of this discussion is based on the premise that the racism undergone by Asians has differed from that undergone by Blacks, Spanish-surnamed and Native Americans. Whereas these others were often separated from their past and culture, this was not generally true of Asians in America. Despite the great prejudices heaped upon them in America, Asians have been able to reinforce much of their native cultures and identities. Accordingly, what may be cultural survival for one ethnic group may be luxury for the Asians. If one ethnic group needs generous curricular doses of holidays and ethnic foods for pride and identity, most Asians do not since they already live their Asian identities and have not been separated from them. Additionally, if there is to be any studying of foods or festivals, it should be done as crossculturally as possible. There should be underlying themes that cross all cultures. Isolated studying of foods and festivals, however, is of limited value.

There is yet another area of pluralism ignored by most Asian bicultural programs, that of studying the varying things that add up to an Asian identity - e.g., Asian forms of geneology, simple uses of the abacus, folk arts such as paper cutting as distinct from esoteric paintings and scrolls. Even in the area of children's textbooks discussing Asian people to emulate, the so-called Asian "heavies" are usually Asians who have had nothing to do with the experiences of the majority of Asians in America. The Asians who worked their way up to be a senator or the Mandarin Chinese who helped build the atom bomb just somehow does nothing for Asian identity, particularly as these types of Asians have little to do with the mass of Asians who have truly helped to build America. Why these real Asian heros are rarely ever mentioned in Asian bilingual programs is still a mystery.

Children's textbooks from China. In the area of children's textbooks, Asians, fortunately, have good examples from the Peoples Republic of China as to how needs assessment is being successfully met. Aside from the didactic tones that we Westerners are not used to hearing, China's children's textbooks reflect a style and content that has been deliberately chosen to achieve a premeditated end. For example, these textbooks unobtrusively meet these need areas: (1) Children do not cease being children even though they concern themselves with adult affairs; (2) sex roles are challenging; (3) China's ethnic

minorities are participating positively in the issues that affect all of China and they are not pictured as exotics or as aliens; and (4) there is moral commitment in that the values China wants respected and developed show through clearly. In The Little Doctor, it is a girl that is treating a doll and teddy bear. It is also a girl that is repairing a rocking horse with "boys" tools. In the Red Women's Detachment, open recognition is given of the first women's detachment done by a minority group, the Li people of Hainan. In Brave Little Shepherd Shaolu, an Inner Mongolian boy leads a flock of 400 sheep safely through a blizzard. In Huang Chikuang, for older children, there are horrors, political developments, and commitments by the hero.

There is no expression of paternalism. No one must prove his or her equality. There is often a thematic emphasis on the ability of a united people to pit determination successfully and to display ingenuity against oppressors.

These books are inexpensive - averaging 25¢ - and are visually attractive. They provide good models of meeting needs in a professional way. They also retain their varied Asiannesses, if there is such a word.

Asian bicultural programs would do well to learn some lessons from their counterparts in China. Other works that capture the identities of the peoples they portray are works by people like Langston Hughes (e.g., The Best of Simple, "Christmas Song") and like Hawaiian children's authors who use pidgin English in a most charming style.

Some orientation techniques for cross-cultural sensitivity. Since this workshop is for adult bilingual educators and leaders, some discussion and ideas about orientation, or reorientation, to concepts of bicultural techniques ought to be gone over.

One assumption bilingual-bicultural personnel should come away with is that all cultural groups have natural linguistic and cultural barriers. People who live only in one culture probably do not recognize this fact. Learning about these barriers is not so that they can be torn down or circumvented. Instead, bilingual-bicultural personnel should create an attitude of knowing their own barriers and those of other cultures and developing healthy attitudes towards these boundaries. For example, those who are familiar with Hawaii know that the word "kuliana" means one's own private domain. The old Hawaiians divided their properties with lava walls. These enclosures, kulianas, separated one household from another. Besides separating, these kulianas also established the identities of different groups. It is interesting to note, as Gregory Trifonovitch states in Topics in Culture Learning ("On Cross-Cultural Orientation Techniques"), that all of the wars fought among the Hawaiians were among neighboring villages and islands where there were no man-made barriers between them. As the saying goes, "Good fences build good neighbors," quotes Trifonovitch.

Another assumption is that culture is usually more effectively learned on the affective level than on the cognitive level, particularly when first learning about another culture. Being imbued with a missionary complex, many would ask those of other cultures something about, say, their family systems.

In a good orientation program, the person being asked should throw the question back at his questioner first. This tactic would put the burden of proof on the "savior," who would then have to investigate and verbalize his own cultural patterns.

A technique to create an awareness of cultural differences is to shock the participants, in keeping, of course, with the affective domain. During a group training session, as described in Topics in Culture Learning, with Americans and Micronesians, a female Micronesian staff mamber appeared before the group in her native attire, i.e., a grass skirt and bare breasted. After her address, the participants discussed their reactions. Comments ranged from "It wasn't necessary for you to do this. We could have found out later by ourselves," to "That was great, but I was too embarassed to look," to "I wanted to gawk, but my wife wouldn't let me." The Micronesians then explained that they had the same reactions to American women wearing shorts, exposing thighs, tabu parts of the body in their culture. Knowledge, obviously, was internalized on the affective level.

Another example of an effective technique is to encourage participants to be themselves although they may be in a different environment. Doing this will show that it is wrong in real life. For example, one Micronesian staff member was holding language lessons on the grass next to the beach. He interrupted his language lessons by blowing his nose the Micronesian way, i.e., he put his thumb to one nostril and blew very sharply through the other, clearing his nose on the grass. At first, this was tolerated by the American participants, but later, some became very disgusted, and finally, one of the braver Americans approached the Micronesian teacher and explained that it was unsanitary to blow his nose the was he was. The Micronesian immediately apologized and then asked that the American show him the way Americans would perform the same function. Whereupon, the American pulled out his handkerchief and blew his nose. Immediately, the Micronesian reacted and said "And you carry that stuff in your pocket all day long?" Yes, even sanitation matters are culturally based. Hopefully, this description will alert the reader to the fact that we in crosscultural education must know and respect cultural barriers.

To help the Americans overcome the feeling that Pacific Islanders were relaxed and lazy, the Micronesians invited the Americans to live one day as they did. By the time the Americans discovered in the early morning that there was no such thing as electricity; that toilets had to be flushed by sea water carried from a central source; that breakfast consisted primarily of coconuts; that they had to hunt for shell fish; that they had to build a fire, husk the coconut, grate the copra, and squeeze the milk, they were quite tired. All these activities, it might be added, were performed without the benefit of watches. And after breakfast was completed, the Americans had to prepare for the next meal. The rest of the day was no easier. The next day, in discussing their reactions, the Americans realized the hardships that were imposed on the Micronesian families when they had to sacrifice their children's assistance to the schools. They also realized that many Micronesian children were expending a great deal of energy before school started and therefore seemed tired. This was not to be mistaken for laziness or boredom.

In our bicultural programs, then, there should be less emphasis placed on books and more on learning from people. Much cultural and language learning on the cognitive level should be accomplished through sharing. By this technique, educators may come to realize that education should be with rather than for our children. A must, also, is to have trainers from both cultures.

Some crosscultural curricular concepts. On page 24, a number of topics were alluded to as being necessary areas of study for Asian bilingual/bicultural programs - consumer education, war and peace, values inquiry, etc. If all these seem too much for any program to undertake, perhaps the work can be simplified by narrowing the number of topics into major themes such as (a) similarities and differences, (b) change and adaptation, (c) living together - e.g., family and kinship, community and nation, race and migration, (d) making a living - human needs, using resources, competing and cooperating, (e) freedom and control - rules and customs, rights and responsibilites, and (f) planning and changing - making decisions, community planning.

Aside from the what, the what to teach in crosscultural education, one needs to know something about the how. The curriculum should be concept based more than content based; the concepts ought to be applied; they ought to be thematically unified; and local experiences should provide the content by which the concepts are attained. More specifically, crosscultural education should be based on a clearly expressed need. More likely than not, limited and non-English-speaking children will become alienated from their own cultures through schooling. To prevent this, the major tactic would be to find ways of involving them, ways consistent with modern education. In Palau, for example, teams of older youngsters collected oral histories from old village people. The old people were taped, which were then transcribed into Palauan texts with the translating done by the children. In turn, these translations were checked by older and more knowledgeable Palauans. To date, two booklets of legends have been edited and published.

Another text prepared was on the contacts made between Palauans and outsiders as seen through the eyes of Palauans.

These results are quite considerable and commendable, but of greater importance is the relevant experiences which the Palauans underwent. Curricular processes were as important as the products produced. Local crosscultural learning can be fun.

Summary. In tying together the various areas discussed - (a) the historical and international scope of educating culturally disadvantage children, (b) the post-school problems of Asian-Americans, (c) the directions Asian educational programs should aim for, (d) the examples China today presents us in the field of children's literature, (e) the crosscultural orientation techniques used by Americans and Micronesians, and (f) the broad curricular processes educators should be aware of in developing viable and relevant programs - the reader should be left with the knowledge that Asian bilingual and bicultural programs must make themselves pluralistic in any number of ways. This situation of most Asian programs being non-pluralistic should not be in this day and age of information explosion and communication revolution. Norma Hernandez in the

Winter 1973 issue of the Review of Educational Research collated 227 research studies of variables affecting the achievement of Mexican-American students. Can Asians afford not to make an effort along this line? Have there not been studies on Asian achievement variables - physical, psychological, cultural, social, and economic? Is there not a vast set of resources to draw upon - the International Bureau of Education, UNESCO, and Hawaii's East-West Center, for example? Asians need not reinvent the wheel nor need they remain amateurs in their educational undertakings.

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